GRIMNISMOL

The Ballad of Grimnir

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The *Grimnismol* follows the *Vafthruthnismol* in the *Codex Regius* and is also found complete in the *Arnamagnæan Codex*, where also it follows the *Vafthruthnismol*. Snorri quotes over twenty of its stanzas.

Like the preceding poem, the *Grimnismol* is largely encyclopedic in nature, and consists chiefly of proper names, the last forty-seven stanzas containing no less than two hundred and twenty-five of these. It is not, however, in dialogue form. As Müllenhoff pointed out, there is underneath the catalogue of mythological names a consecutive and thoroughly dramatic story. Othin, concealed under the name of Grimnir, is through an error tortured by King Geirröth. Bound between two blazing fires, he begins to display his wisdom for the benefit of the king's little son, Agnar, who has been kind to him. Gradually he works up to the great final moment, when he declares his true name, or rather names, to the terrified Geirröth, and the latter falls on his sward and is killed.

For much of this story we do not have to depend on guesswork, for in both manuscripts the poem itself is preceded by a prose narrative of considerable length, and concluded by a brief prose statement of the manner of Geirröth's death. These prose notes, of which there are many in the Eddic manuscripts, are of considerable interest to the student of early literary forms. Presumably they were written by the compiler to whom we owe the Eddic collection, who felt that the poems needed such annotation in order to be clear. Linguistic evidence shows that they were written in the twelfth or thirteenth century, for they preserve none of the older word-forms which help us to date many of the poems two or three hundred years earlier.

Without discussing in detail the problems suggested by these prose passages, it is worth noting, first, that the Eddic poems contain relatively few stanzas of truly narrative verse; and second, that all of them are based on narratives which must have been more or less familiar to the hearers of the poems. In other words, the poems seldom aimed to tell stories, although most of them followed a narrative sequence of ideas. The stories

themselves appear to have lived in oral prose tradition, just as in the case of the sagas; and the prose notes of the manuscripts, in so far as they contain material not simply drawn from the poems themselves, are relics of this tradition. The early Norse poets rarely conceived verse as a suitable means for direct story telling, and in some of the poems even the simplest action is told in prose "links" between dialogue stanzas.

The applications of this fact, which has been too often over looked, are almost limitless, for it suggests a still unwritten chapter in the history of ballad poetry and the so-called "popular" epic. It implies that narrative among early peoples may frequently have had a period of prose existence before it was made into verse, and thus puts, for example, a long series of transitional stages before such a poem as the *Iliad*. In any case, the prose notes accompanying the Eddic poems prove that in addition to the poems themselves there existed in the twelfth century a considerable amount of narrative tradition, presumably in prose form, on which these notes were based by the compiler.

Interpolations in such a poem as the *Grimnismol* could have been made easily enough, and many stanzas have undoubtedly crept in from other poems, but the beginning and end of the poem are clearly marked, and presumably it has come down to us with the same essential outline it had when it was composed, probably in the first half of the tenth century.

King Hrauthung had two sons: one was called Agnar, and the other Geirröth. Agnar was ten winters old, and Geirröth eight. Once they both rowed in a boat with their fishing-gear to catch little fish; and the wind drove them out into the sea. In the darkness of the night they were wrecked on the shore; and going up, they found a poor peasant, with whom they stayed through the winter. The housewife took care of Agnar, and the peasant cared for

[Prose. The texts of the two manuscripts differ in many minor details. *Hrauthung*: this mythical king is not mentioned elsewhere. *Geirröth*: the manuscripts spell his name in various ways {footnote p. 86} *Frigg*: Othin's wife. She and Othin nearly always disagreed in some such way as the one outlined in this story. *Hlithskjolf* ("Gate-Shelf"): Othin's watch-tower in heaven, whence he can overlook all the nine worlds; cf. *Skirnismol*, introductory prose. *Grimnir*: "the Hooded One."]

{p. 86}

Geirröth, and taught him wisdom. In the spring the peasant gave him a boat; and when the couple led them to the shore, the peasant spoke secretly with Geirröth. They had a fair wind, and came to their father's landing-place. Geirröth was forward in the boat; he leaped up on land, but pushed out the boat and said, "Go thou now where evil may have thee!" The boat drifted out to sea. Geirröth, however, went up to the house, and was well received, but his father was dead. Then Geirröth was made king, and became a renowned man.

Othin and Frigg sat in Hlithskjolf and looked over all the worlds. Othin said: "Seest thou Agnar, thy foster ling, how he begets children with a giantess in the cave? But Geirröth, my fosterling, is a king, and now rules over his land." Frigg said: "He is so miserly that he tortures his guests if he thinks that too many of them come to him." Othin replied that this was the greatest of lies; and they made a wager about this matter. Frigg sent her maid-servant, Fulla, to Geirröth. She bade the king beware lest a magician who was come thither to his land should bewitch him, and told this sign concerning him, that no dog was so fierce as to leap at him. Now it was a very great slander that King Geirröth was not hospitable; but nevertheless he had them take the man whom the dogs would

not attack. He wore a dark-blue mantle and called himself Grimnir, but said no more about himself, though

{p. 87}

he was questioned. The king had him tortured to make him speak, and set him between two fires, and he sat there eight nights. King Geirröth had a son ten winters old, and called Agnar after his father's brother. Agnar went to Grimnir, and gave him a full horn to drink from, and said that the king did ill in letting him be tormented with out cause. Grimnir drank from the horn; the fire had come so near that the mantle burned on Grimnir's back. He spake:

1. Hot art thou, fire! | too fierce by far;
Get ye now gone, ye flames!
The mantle is burnt, | though I bear it aloft,
And the fire scorches the fur.

2. 'Twixt the fires now | eight nights have I sat,
And no man brought meat to me,
Save Agnar alone, | and alone shall rule
Geirröth's son o'er the Goths.

3. Hail to thee, Agnar! | for hailed thou art
By the voice of Veratyr;

[2. In the original lines 2 and 4 are both too long for the meter, and thus the true form of the stanza is doubtful. For line 4 both manuscripts have "the land of the Goths" instead of simply "the Goths." The word "Goths" apparently was applied indiscriminately to any South-Germanic people, including the Burgundians as well as the actual Goths, and thus here has no specific application; cf. *Gripisspo*, 35 and note.]

{p. 88}

For a single drink | shalt thou never receive
A greater gift as reward.

4. The land is holy | that lies hard by
The gods and the elves together;
And Thor shall ever | in Thruthheim dwell,
Till the gods to destruction go.

5. Ydalir call they | the place where Ull
A hall for himself hath set;
And Alfheim the gods | to Freyr once gave
As a tooth-gift in ancient times.

6. A third home is there, | with silver thatched
By the hands of the gracious gods:
Valaskjolf is it, | in days of old
Set by a god for himself.

7. Sökkvabekk is the fourth, | where cool waves flow,

[3. *Veratyr* ("Lord of Men"): Othin. The "gift" which Agnar receives is Othin's mythological lore.

4. *Thruthheim* ("the Place of Might"): the place where Thor, the strongest of the gods, has his hall, Bilskirnir, described in stanza 24.

5. *Ydalir* ("Yew-Dales"): the home of Ulf, the archer among the gods, a son of Thor's wife, Sif, by another marriage. The wood of the yew-tree was used for bows in the North just as it was long afterwards in England. *Alfheim*: the home of the elves. *Freyr*: cf. Skirnismol, introductory prose and note. *Tooth-gift*: the custom of making a present to a child when it cuts its first tooth is, according to Vigfusson, still in vogue in Iceland.

6. *Valaskjolf* ("the Shelf of the Slain"): Othin's home, in which is his watch-tower, Hlithskjolf. Gering identifies this with Valhall, and as that is mentioned in stanza 8, he believes stanza 6 to be an interpolation.]

{p. 89}

And amid their murmur it stands;
There daily do Othin | and Saga drink
In gladness from cups of gold.

8. The fifth is Glathsheim, | and gold-bright there
Stands Valhall stretching wide;
And there does Othin | each day choose
The men who have fallen in fight.

9. Easy is it to know | for him who to Othin
Comes and beholds the hall;
Its rafters are spears, | with shields is it roofed,
On its benches are breastplates strewn.

10. Easy is it to know | for him who to Othin
Comes and beholds the hall;
There hangs a wolf | by the western door,
And o'er it an eagle hovers.

11. The sixth is Thrymheim, | where Thjazi dwelt,
The giant of marvelous might;

[7. *Sökkvabekk* ("the Sinking Stream"): of this spot and of Saga, who is said to live there, little is known. Saga may be an hypostasis of Frigg, but Snorri calls her a distinct goddess, and the name suggests some relation to history or story-telling.

8. *Glathsheim* ("the Place of Joy"): Othin's home, the greatest and most beautiful hall in the world. *Valhall* ("Hall of the Slain"): cf. *Voluspo*, V and note. Valhall is not only the hall whither the slain heroes are brought by the Valkyries, but also a favorite home of Othin.

10. The opening formula is abbreviated in both manuscripts. *A wolf*: probably the wolf and the eagle were carved figures above the door.]

{p. 90}

Now Skathi abides, | the god's fair bride,
In the home that her father had.

12. The seventh is Breithablik; | Baldr has there
For himself a dwelling set,
In the land I know | that lies so fair,
And from evil fate is free.

13. Himinbjorg is the eighth, | and Heimdall there
O'er men holds sway, it is said;
In his well-built house | does the warder of heaven
The good mead gladly drink.

14. The ninth is Folkvang, | where Freyja decrees

[11. *Thrymheim* ("the Home of Clamor"): on this mountain the giant Thjazi built his home. The god, or rather Wane, Njorth (cf. *Voluspo*, 21, note) married Thjazi's daughter, Skathi. She wished to live in her father's hall among the mountains, while Njorth loved his home, Noatun, by the sea. They agreed to compromise by spending nine nights at Thrymheim and then three at Noatun, but neither could endure the surroundings of the other's home, so Skathi returned to Thrymheim, while Njorth stayed at Noatun. Snorri quotes stanzas 11-15.

12. *Breithablik* ("Wide-Shining"): the house in heaven, free from everything unclean, in which Baldr (cf. *Voluspo*, 32, note), the fairest and best of the gods, lived.

13. *Himinbjorg* ("Heaven's Cliffs"): the dwelling at the end of the bridge Bifrost (the rainbow), where Heimdall (cf. *Voluspo*, 27) keeps watch against the coming of the giants. In this stanza the two functions of Heimdall--as father of mankind (cf. *Voluspo*, 1 and note, and *Rigsthula*, introductory prose and note) and as warder of the gods--seem both to be mentioned, but the second line in the manuscripts is apparently in bad shape, and in the editions is more or less conjectural.

14. *Folkvang* ("Field of the Folk): here is situated Freyja's {footnote p. 91} hall, Sessrymnir ("Rich in Seats"). Freyja, the sister of Freyr, is the fairest of the goddesses, and the most kindly disposed to mankind, especially to lovers. *Half of the dead*: Mogk has made it clear that Freyja represents a confusion between two originally distinct divinities: the wife of Othin (Frigg) and the northern goddess of love. This passage appears to have in mind her attributes as Othin's wife. Snorri has this same confusion, but there is no reason why the Freyja who was Freyr's sister should share the slain with Othin.]

{p. 91}

Who shall have seats in the hall;
The half of the dead | each day does she choose,
And half does Othin have.

15. The tenth is Glitnir; | its pillars are gold,
And its roof with silver is set;
There most of his days | does Forseti dwell,
And sets all strife at end.

16. The eleventh is Noatun; | there has Njorth
For himself a dwelling set;
The sinless ruler | of men there sits
In his temple timbered high.

17. Filled with growing trees | and high-standing grass
Is Vithi, Vithar's land;

[15. *Glitnir* ("the Shining"): the home of Forseti, a god of whom we know nothing beyond what Snorri tells us: "Forseti is the son of Baldr and Nanna, daughter of Nep. All those who come to him with hard cases to settle go away satisfied; he is the best judge among gods and men."

16. *Noatun* ("Ships'-Haven"): the home of Njorth, who calms the waves; cf. stanza 11 and *Voluspo*, 21.

17. *Vithi*: this land is not mentioned elsewhere. *Vithar* avenged his father, Othin, by slaying the wolf Fenrir.]

{p. 92}

But there did the son | from his steed leap down,
When his father he fain would avenge.

18. In Eldhrimnir | Andhrimnir cooks
Sæhrimnir's seething flesh,--
The best of food, | but few men know
On what fare the warriors feast.

19. Freki and Geri | does Heerfather feed,
The far-famed fighter of old:
But on wine alone | does the weapon-decked god,
Othin, forever live.

20. O'er Mithgarth Hugin | and Munin both
Each day set forth to fly;
For Hugin I fear | lest he come not home,
But for Munin my care is more.

[18. Stanzas 18-20 appear also in Snorri's Edda. Very possibly they are an interpolation here. *Eldhrimnir* ("Sooty with Fire"): the great kettle in Valhall, wherein the gods' cook, *Andhrimnir* ("The Sooty-Faced")

daily cooks the flesh of the boar *Sæhrimnir* ("The Blackened"). His flesh suffices for all the heroes there gathered, and each evening he becomes whole again, to be cooked the next morning.

19. *Freki* ("The Greedy") and *Geri* ("The Ravenous"): the two wolves who sit by Othin's side at the feast, and to whom he gives all the food set before him, since wine is food and drink alike for him. *Heerfather*: Othin.

20, *Mithgarth* ("The Middle Home"): the earth. *Hugin* ("Thought") and *Munin* ("Memory"): the two ravens who sit on Othin's shoulders, and fly forth daily to bring him news of the world.]

{p. 93}

21. Loud roars Thund, | and Thjothvitnir's fish
joyously fares in the flood;
Hard does it seem | to the host of the slain
To wade the torrent wild.

22. There Valgrind stands, | the sacred gate,
And behind are the holy doors;
Old is the gate, | but few there are
Who can tell how it tightly is locked.

23. Five hundred doors | and forty there are,
I ween, in Valhall's walls;
Eight hundred fighters | through one door fare
When to war with the wolf they go.

24. Five hundred rooms | and forty there are
I ween, in Bilskirnir built;

[21. *Thund* ("The Swollen" or "The Roaring"): the river surrounding Valhall. *Thjothvitnir's fish*: presumably the sun, which was caught by the wolf Skoll (cf. *Voluspo*, 40), Thjothvitnir meaning "the mighty wolf." Such a phrase, characteristic of all Skaldic poetry, is rather rare in the Edda. The last two lines refer to the attack on Valhall by the people of Hel; cf. Voluspo, 51.

22. *Valgrind* ("The Death-Gate"): the outer gate of Valhall; cf. *Sigurtharkvitha en skamma*, 68 and note.

23. This and the following stanza stand in reversed order in *Regius*. Snorri quotes stanza 23 as a proof of the vast size of Valhall. The last two lines refer to the final battle with Fenrir and the other enemies.

24. This stanza is almost certainly an interpolation, brought in through a confusion of the first two lines with those of stanza 23. Its description of Thor's house, Bilskirnir (cf. stanza 4 and {footnote p. 94} note) has nothing to do with that of Valhall. Snorri quotes the stanza in his account of Thor.]

{p. 94}

Of all the homes | whose roofs I beheld,
My son's the greatest meseemed.

25. Heithrun is the goat | who stands by Heerfather's hall,
And the branches of Lærath she bites;
The pitcher she fills | with the fair, clear mead,
Ne'er fails the foaming drink.

26. Eikthyrnir is the hart | who stands by Heerfather's hall
And the branches of Lærath he bites;
From his horns a stream | into Hvergelmir drops,
Thence all the rivers run.

[25. The first line in the original is, as indicated in the translation, too long, and various attempts to amend it have been made. *Heithrun*: the she-goat who lives on the twigs of the tree *Lærath* (presumably the ash Yggdrasil), and daily gives mead which, like the boar's flesh, suffices for all the heroes in Valhall. In Snorri's *Edda* Gangleri foolishly asks whether the heroes drink water, whereto Har replies, "Do you imagine that Othin invites kings and earls and other noble men, and then gives them water to drink?"

26. Eikthyrnir ("The Oak-Thorned," i.e., with antlers, "thorns," like an oak): this animal presumably represents the clouds. The first line, like that of stanza 25, is too long in the original. *Lærath*: cf. stanza 25, note. *Hvergelmir*: according to Snorri, this spring, "the Cauldron-Roaring," was in the midst of Niflheim, the world of darkness and the dead, beneath the third root of the ash Yggdrasil. Snorri gives a list of the rivers flowing thence nearly identical with the one in the poem.]

{p. 95}

27. Sith and Vith, | Sækin and Ækin,
Svol and Fimbulthul, | Gunnthro, and Fjorm,
Rin and Rinnandi,
Gipul and Gopul, | Gomul and Geirvimul,
That flow through the fields of the gods;
Thyn and Vin, | Thol and Hol,
Groth and Gunnthorin.

28. Vino is one, | Vegsvin another,
And Thjothnuma a third;
Nyt and Not, | Non and Hron,
Slith and Hrith, | Sylg and Ylg,
Vith and Von, | Vond and Strond,
Gjol and Leipt, | that go among men,
And hence they fall to Hel.

[27. The entire passage from stanza 27 through stanza 35 is confused. The whole thing may well be an interpolation. Bugge calls stanzas 27-30 an interpolation, and editors who have accepted the passage as a whole have rejected various lines. The spelling of the names of the rivers varies greatly in the manuscripts and editions. It is needless here to point out the many attempted emendations of this list. For a passage presenting similar problems, cf. *Voluspo*, 10-16. Snorri virtually quotes stanzas 27-29 in his prose, though not consecutively. The name *Rin*, in line 3, is identical with that for the River Rhine which appears frequently in the hero poems, but the similarity is doubt less purely accidental.

28. *Slith* may possibly be the same river as that mentioned in Voluspo, 36, as flowing through the giants' land. *Leipt*: in *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana II*, 29, this river is mentioned as one by which a solemn oath is

sworn, and Gering points the parallel to the significance of the Styx among the Greeks. The other rivers here named are not mentioned elsewhere in the poems.]

{p. 96}

29. Kormt and Ormt | and the Kerlaugs twain
Shall Thor each day wade through,
(When dooms to give | he forth shall go
To the ash-tree Yggdrasil;)
For heaven's bridge | burns all in flame,
And the sacred waters seethe.

30. Glath and Gyllir, | Gler and Skeithbrimir,
Silfrintopp and Sinir,
Gisl and Falhofnir, | Golltopp and Lettfeti,
On these steeds the gods shall go
When dooms to give | each day they ride
To the ash-tree Yggdrasil.

[29. This stanza looks as though it originally had had nothing to do with the two preceding it. Snorri quotes it in his description of the three roots of Yggdrasil, and the three springs be neath them. "The third root of the ash stands in heaven and beneath this root is a spring which is very holy, and is called Urth's well." (Cf. *Voluspo*, 19) "There the gods have their judgment-seat, and thither they ride each day over Bifrost, which is also called the Gods' Bridge." Thor has to go on foot in the last days of the destruction, when the bridge is burning. Another interpretation, however, is that when Thor leaves the heavens (i.e., when a thunder-storm is over) the rainbow-bridge becomes hot in the sun. Nothing more is known of the rivers named in this stanza. Lines 3-4 are almost certainly interpolated from stanza 30.

30. This stanza, again possibly an interpolation, is closely paraphrased by Snorri following the passage quoted in the previous note. *Glath* ("Joyous"): identified in the *Skaldskaparmal* with Skinfaxi, the horse of day; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 12. *Gyllir*: "Golden." *Gler*: "Shining." *Skeithbrimir*: "Swift-Going." *Silfrintopp*: "Silver-Topped." Sinir: "Sinewy." *Gisl*: the meaning is doubtful; Gering suggests "Gleaming." *Falhofnir*: {footnote p. 97}"Hollow-Hoofed." *Golltopp* ("Gold-Topped"): this horse be longed to Heimdall (cf. Voluspo, i and 46). It is noteworthy that gold was one of the attributes of Heimdall's belongings, and, because his teeth were of gold, he was also called Gullintanni ("Gold-Toothed"). *Lettfeti*: "Light-Feet." Othin's eight footed horse, *Sleipnir*, is not mentioned in this list.]

{p. 97}

31. Three roots there are | that three ways run
'Neath the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
'Neath the first lives Hel, | 'neath the second the frost-giants,
'Neath the last are the lands of men.

32. Ratatosk is the squirrel | who there shall run
On the ash-tree Yggdrasil;
From above the words | of the eagle he bears,
And tells them to Nithhogg beneath.

33. Four harts there are, | that the highest twigs

[31. The first of these roots is the one referred to in stanza 26; the second in stanza 29 (cf. notes). Of the third root there is nothing noteworthy recorded. After this stanza it is more than possible that one has been lost, paraphrased in the prose of Snorri's Edda thus: "An eagle sits in the branches of the ash tree, and he is very wise; and between his eyes sits the hawk who is called Vethrfolnir."

32. *Ratatosk* ("The Swift-Tusked"): concerning this squirrel, the Prose Edda has to add only that he runs up and down the tree conveying the abusive language of the eagle (see note on stanza 31) and the dragon *Nithhogg* (cf. *Voluspo*, 39 and note) to each other. The hypothesis that Ratatosk "represents the undying hatred between the sustaining and the destroying elements-the gods and the giants," seems a trifle far-fetched.

33. Stanzas 33-34 may well be interpolated, and are certainly in bad shape in the Mss. Bugge points out that they are probably of later origin than those surrounding them. Snorri {footnote p. 98} closely paraphrases stanza 33, but without elaboration, and nothing further is known of the *four harts*. It may be guessed, however, that they are a late multiplication of the single hart mentioned in stanza 26, just as the list of dragons in stanza 34 seems to have been expanded out of Nithhogg, the only authentic dragon under the root of the ash. *Highest twigs*: a guess; the Mss. words are baffling. Something has apparently been lost from lines 3-4, but there is no clue as to its nature.]

{p. 99}

Nibble with necks bent back;
Dain and Dvalin, | . . . . . .
Duneyr and Dyrathror.

34. More serpents there are | beneath the ash
Than an unwise ape would think;
Goin and Moin, | Grafvitnir's sons,
Grabak and Grafvolluth,
Ofnir and Svafnir | shall ever, methinks,
Gnaw at the twigs of the tree.

35. Yggdrasil's ash | great evil suffers,
Far more than men do know;

[34. Cf. note on previous stanza. Nothing further is known of any of the serpents here listed, and the meanings of many of the names are conjectural. Snorri quotes this stanza. Editors have altered it in various ways in an attempt to regularize the meter. *Goin* and *Moin*: meaning obscure. *Grafvitnir*: "The Gnawing Wolf." *Grabak*: "Gray-Back." *Grafvolluth*: "The Field Gnawer." *Ofnir* and *Svafnir* ("The Bewilderer" and "The Sleep-Bringer"): it is noteworthy that in stanza 54 Othin gives himself these two names.

35. Snorri quotes this stanza, which concludes the passage, beginning with stanza 25, describing Yggdrasil. If we assume that stanzas 27-34 are later interpolations--possibly excepting 32--this section of the poem reads clearly enough.]

{p. 99}

The hart bites its top, | its trunk is rotting,
And Nithhogg gnaws beneath.

36. Hrist and Mist | bring the horn at my will,
Skeggjold and Skogul;
Hild and Thruth, | Hlok and Herfjotur,
Gol and Geironul,
Randgrith and Rathgrith | and Reginleif
Beer to the warriors bring.

37. Arvak and Alsvith | up shall drag
Weary the weight of the sun;
But an iron cool | have the kindly gods
Of yore set under their yokes.

[36. Snorri quotes this list of the Valkyries, concerning whom cf. Voluspo, 31 and note, where a different list of names is given. *Hrist*: "Shaker." *Mist*: "Mist." *Skeggjold*: "Ax-Time." *Skogul*: "Raging" (?). *Hild*: "Warrior." *Thruth*: "Might." *Hlok*: "Shrieking." *Herfjotur*: "Host-Fetter." *Gol*: "Screaming." *Geironul*: "Spear-Bearer." *Randgrith*: "Shield-Bearer." *Rathgrith*: Gering guesses "Plan-Destroyer." *Reginleif*: "Gods'-Kin." Manuscripts and editions vary greatly in the spelling of these names, and hence in their significance.

37. Müllenhoff suspects stanzas 37-41 to have been interpolated, and Edzardi thinks they may have come from the *Vafthruthnismol*. Snorri closely paraphrases stanzas 37-39, and quotes 40-41. *Arvak* ("Early Waker") and *Alsvith* ("All Swift"): the horses of the sun, named also in *Sigrdrifumol*, 15. According to Snorri: "There was a man called Mundilfari, who had two children; they were so fair and lovely that he called his son Mani and his daughter Sol. The gods were angry at this presumption, and took the children and set them up in heaven; and they bade Sol drive the horses that drew the car of the sun {footnote p. 100} which the gods had made to light the world from the sparks which flew out of Muspellsheim. The horses were called Alsvith and Arvak, and under their yokes the gods set two bellows to cool them, and in some songs these are called 'the cold iron.'"]

{p. 100}

38. In front of the sun | does Svalin stand,
The shield for the shining god;
Mountains and sea | would be set in flames
If it fell from before the sun.

39. Skoll is the wolf | that to Ironwood
Follows the glittering god,
And the son of Hrothvitnir, | Hati, awaits
The burning bride of heaven.

40. Out of Ymir's flesh | was fashioned the earth,
And the ocean out of his blood;
Of his bones the hills, | of his hair the trees,
Of his skull the heavens high.

[38. *Svalin* ("The Cooling"): the only other reference to this shield is in *Sigrdrifumol*, 15.

39. *Skoll* and *Hati*: the wolves that devour respectively the sun and moon. The latter is the son of Hrothvitnir ("The Mighty Wolf," i. e. Fenrir); cf. *Voluspo*, 40, and *Vafthruthnismol*, 46-47, in which Fenrir appears as the thief. *Ironwood*: a conjectural emendation of an obscure phrase; cf. *Voluspo*, 40.

40. This and the following stanza are quoted by Snorri. They seem to have come from a different source from the others of this poem; Edzardi suggests an older version of the *Vafthruthnismol*. This stanza is closely parallel to *Vafthruthnismol*, 21, which see, as also *Voluspo*, 3. Snorri, following this account, has a few details to add. The stones were made out of Ymir's teeth and such of his bones as were broken. Mithgarth was a mountain-wall made out of Ymir's eyebrows, and set around the earth because of the enmity of the giants.]

{p. 101}

41. Mithgarth the gods | from his eyebrows made,
And set for the sons of men;
And out of his brain | the baleful clouds
They made to move on high.

42. His the favor of Ull | and of all the gods
Who first in the flames will reach;
For the house can be seen | by the sons of the gods
If the kettle aside were cast.

43. In days of old | did Ivaldi's sons
Skithblathnir fashion fair,
The best of ships | for the bright god Freyr,
The noble son of Njorth.

[42. With this stanza Othin gets back to his immediate situation, bound as he is between two fires. He calls down a blessing on the man who will reach into the fire and pull aside the great kettle which, in Icelandic houses, hung directly under the smoke vent in the roof, and thus kept any one above from looking down into the interior. On *Ull*, the archer-god, cf. stanza 5 and note. He is specified here apparently for no better reason than that his name fits the initial-rhyme.

43. This and the following stanza are certainly interpolated, for they have nothing to do with the context, and stanza 45 continues the dramatic conclusion of the poem begun in stanza 42. This stanza is quoted by Snorri. *Ivaldi* ("The Mighty"): he is known only as the father of the craftsmen-dwarfs who made not only the ship Skithblathnir, but also Othin's spear Gungnir, and the golden hair for Thor's wife, Sif, after Loki had maliciously cut her own hair off. *Skithblathnir*: this ship ("Wooden-Bladed") always had a fair wind, whenever the sail was set; it could be folded up at will and put in the pocket. *Freyr*: concerning him and his father, see Voluspo, 21, note, and *Skirnismol*, introductory prose and note.]

{p. 102}

44. The best of trees | must Yggdrasil be,
Skithblathnir best of boats;
Of all the gods | is Othin the greatest,
And Sleipnir the best of steeds;
Bifrost of bridges, | Bragi of skalds,
Hobrok of hawks, | and Garm of hounds.

45. To the race of the gods | my face have I raised,
And the wished-for aid have I waked;
For to all the gods | has the message gone
That sit in Ægir's seats,
That drink within Ægir's doors.

[44. Snorri quotes this stanza. Like stanza 43 an almost certain interpolation, it was probably drawn in by the reference to Skithblathnir in the stanza interpolated earlier. It is presumably in faulty condition. One Ms. has after the fifth line half of a sixth,--"Brimir of swords." *Yggdrasil*: cf. stanzas 25-35. *Skithblathnir*: cf. stanza 43, note. *Sleipnir*: Othin's eight-legged horse, one of Loki's numerous progeny, borne by him to the stallion Svathilfari. This stallion belonged to the giant who built a fortress for the gods, and came so near to finishing it, with Svathilfari's aid, as to make the gods fear he would win his promised reward--Freyja and the sun and moon. To delay the work, Loki turned himself into a mare, whereupon the stallion ran away, and the giant failed to complete his task within the stipulated time. *Bilrost*: probably another form of Bifrost (which Snorri has in his version of the stanza), on which cf. stanza 29. *Bragi*: the god of poetry. He is one of the later figures among the gods, and is mentioned only three times in the poems of the *Edda*. In Snorri's *Edda*, however, he is of great importance. His wife is Ithun, goddess of youth. Perhaps the Norwegian skald Bragi Boddason, the oldest recorded skaldic poet, had been traditionally apotheosized as early as the tenth century. *Hobrok*: nothing further is known of him. *Garm*: cf. Voluspo, 44.

45. With this stanza the narrative current of the poem is resumed. *Æ*gir: the sea-god; cf. *Lokasenna*, introductory prose.]

{p. 103}

46. Grim is my name, | Gangleri am 1,
Herjan and Hjalmberi,
Thekk and Thrithi, | Thuth and Uth,
Helblindi and Hor;

47. Sath and Svipal | and Sanngetal,
Herteit and Hnikar,
Bileyg, Baleyg, | Bolverk, Fjolnir,
Grim and Grimnir, | Glapsvith, Fjolsvith.

48. Sithhott, Sithskegg, | Sigfather, Hnikuth,

[46. Concerning the condition of stanzas 46-50, quoted by Snorri, nothing definite can be said. Lines and entire stanzas of this "catalogue" sort undoubtedly came and went with great freedom all through the period of oral transmission. Many of the names are not mentioned elsewhere, and often their significance is sheer guesswork. As in nearly every episode Othin appeared in disguise, the number of his names was necessarily almost limitless. *Grim*: "The Hooded." *Gangleri*: "The Wanderer." *Herjan*: "The Ruler." *Hjalmberi*: "The Helmet-Bearer." *Thekk*: "The Much-Loved." *Thrithi*: "The Third" (in Snorri's Edda the stories are all told in the form of answers to questions, the speakers being Har, Jafnhar and Thrithi. Just what this tripartite form of Othin signifies has been the source of endless debate. Probably this line is late enough to betray the somewhat muddled influence of early Christianity.) *Thuth* and *Uth*: both names defy guesswork. *Helblindi*: "Hel-Blinder" (two manuscripts have *Herblindi*--"Host-Blinder"). *Hor*: "The High One."

47. *Sath*: "The Truthful." *Svipal*: "The Changing." *Sanngetal*: "The Truth-Teller." *Herteit*: "Glad of the Host." *Hnikar*: "The Overthrower." *Bileyg*: "The Shifty-Eyed." *Baleyg*: "The Flaming-Eyed." *Bolverk*: "Doer

of Ill" (cf. Hovamol, 104 and note). *Fjolnir*: "The Many-Shaped." *Grimnir*: "The Hooded." *Glapswith*: "Swift in Deceit." *Fjolsvith*: "Wide of Wisdom."

48. *Sithhott*: "With Broad Hat." *Sithskegg*: "Long-Bearded." {footnote p. 104} *Sigfather*: 'Father of Victory." *Hnikuth*: "Overthrower." *Valfather*: 'Father of the Slain." *Atrith*: "The Rider." *Farmatyr*: "Helper of Cargoes" (i. e., god of sailors).]

{p. 104}

Allfather, Valfather, | Atrith, Farmatyr:
A single name | have I never had
Since first among men I fared.

49. Grimnir they call me | in Geirröth's hall,
With Asmund Jalk am I;
Kjalar I was | when I went in a sledge,
At the council Thror am I called,
As Vithur I fare to the fight;
Oski, Biflindi, | Jafnhor and Omi,
Gondlir and Harbarth midst gods.

So. I deceived the giant | Sokkmimir old
As Svithur and Svithrir of yore;
Of Mithvitnir's son | the slayer I was
When the famed one found his doom.

[49. Nothing is known of Asmund, of Othin's appearance as Jalk, or of the occasion when he "went in a sledge" as Kjalar ("Ruler of Keels"?). *Thror* and *Vithur* are also of uncertain meaning. *Oski*: "God of Wishes." *Biflindi*: the manuscripts vary widely in the form of this name. *Jafnhor*: "Equally High" (cf. note on stanza 46). *Omi*: "The Shouter." *Gondlir*: "Wand Bearer." *Harbarth*: "Graybeard" (cf. *Harbarthsljoth*, introduction).

50. Nothing further is known of the episode here mentioned Sokkmimir is presumably Mithvitnir's son. Snorri quotes the names Svithur and Svithrir, but omits all the remainder of the stanza.]

{p. 105}

51. Drunk art thou, Geirröth, | too much didst thou drink,
. . . . . .
Much hast thou lost, | for help no more
From me or my heroes thou hast.

52. Small heed didst thou take | to all that I told,
And false were the words of thy friends;
For now the sword | of my friend I see,
That waits all wet with blood.

53. Thy sword-pierced body | shall Ygg have soon,
For thy life is ended at last;
The maids are hostile; | now Othin behold!
Now come to me if thou canst!

54. Now am I Othin, | Ygg was I once,
Ere that did they call me Thund;
Vak and Skilfing, | Vofuth and Hroptatyr,
Gaut and Jalk midst the gods;
Ofnir and Svafnir, | and all, methinks,
Are names for none but me.

[51. Again the poem returns to the direct action, Othin addressing the terrified Geirröth. The manuscripts show no lacuna. Some editors supply a second line from paper manuscripts: "Greatly by me art beguiled."

53. *Ygg*: Othin ("The Terrible"). *The maids*: the three Norns.

54. Possibly out of place, and probably more or less corrupt. *Thund*: "The Thunderer." *Vak*: "The Wakeful." *Skilfing*: "The Shaker." *Vofuth*: "The Wanderer." *Hroptatyr*: "Crier of the Gods." *Gaut*: "Father." *Ofnir and Svafnir*: cf. stanza 34.]

{p. 106}

King Geirröth sat and had his sword on his knee, half drawn from its sheath. But when he heard that Othin was come thither, then he rose up and sought to take Othin from the fire. The sword slipped from his hand, and fell with the hilt down. The king stumbled and fell forward, and the sword pierced him through, and slew him. Then Othin vanished, but Agnar long ruled there as king.

{p. 107}